

FROM THE WAYS OF OUR PIOUS PREDECESSORS

Adapted from Ahmed Fareed's "Min Akhlaaq-us-Salaaf"

FOREWORD

If there is anything an honest and true Muslim learns from life, it is the great value of having good manners and paying sincere attention to one's character in front of Allah. Many a well spoken and intelligent person manages to acquire a sound reputation only to lose it quickly due to subsequent shallow and hideous behaviour. Loss of repute is bad but not quite as calamitous as the harm done to the noble cause of inviting others to Islam and to a godly life. As a result, attitudes harden both towards those who try to promote the faith and those who seek to live by it. This breeds contempt and despair. However, the greatest loss is for the individual who learns and talks about Islam but fails to personally improve in gracious and benevolent character. Such people concentrate on teaching and advising others without adequately looking at their own hearts. They can quote material and use jargon that gives them an air of sophistication and allows them to cheat the public into accepting them as knowledgeable for a while. However, real knowledge nurtures honouring Muslims and others appropriately and prevents one from being rude. One can be rude in many ways, such as being judgemental, harsh, presumptuous, selfish, pretentious, sectarian and so on. Indeed, real knowledge makes a person humble, mature in outlook and careful when dealing with others. Real knowledge, when lodged in the heart, changes a person to appreciate goodness wherever it is found and value creation with gratitude to Allah.

This book offers a glimpse into the lives of those who have been praised by both Allah and His Messenger in general. Written in easy English and specially adapted for those who speak it as a first language, it is an invaluable aid to developing one's character in the footsteps of those who lived and worshipped Allah honourably. It is based on an original Arabic compilation and has been checked for authenticity. People of all ages and learning should be able to benefit from this book. The style facilitates vitally needed reflection on this topic and makes for a great gift to anyone for whom we care.

I had the good fortune to meet the author in Egypt during one of my trips abroad. He kindly gave me permission to translate and promote the work to English-speaking Muslims. I ask Allah to bless and reward him and to grant us and all who read this book inspiration and guidance towards having better conduct in life.

Abu Muntasir
Chief Executive of JIMAS
2005

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1 *Being true to Allah and Islam*

The Muslims of the past whom we look up to, as an example of how to behave, particularly from the first three generations from the time of the Messenger of Allah – the *Salaf* – had many good personal qualities. Even today, Allah expects Muslims to train themselves to have such qualities, so that they can always be in a good position before Him.

Among these qualities one of the most important *has* to be the quality of sincerity (*ikhlas*) – i.e. having a pure heart – when learning about Islam, so that we may learn to live a complete life, taken only from knowledge which Allah accepts. For example, the *Salaf* were afraid of immodesty even of their looks and carefully stayed away from showing off and being proud (*ar-riya'*) in any way, shape or form. Allah says, “Is it not to Allah that a sincere way of life is due?”¹ The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, “Allah does not accept any action unless it is sincerely devoted to Him (in an attempt to) seek His Face.”²

¹ Surah Az-Zumar (39):3

² Reported by an-Nasai (6/25). Al-Albani said, “This *hadith* and others show that the believer’s righteous action is not accepted if he did not intend the Face of Allah by it. About that Allah says: Whoever hopes for the meeting with his Lord, then let him do righteous actions and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord. [Suratul-Kahf (18):110]. So what will be the position of the disbeliever on the Day of Judgement if he never purified his intention for

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Ibrahim at-Taymi (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Someone who is sincerely devoted (to doing good deeds only to please Allah) hides their good deeds just like they hide their bad deeds."

Ash-Sha'bi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Scholars have such good manners that if they have any knowledge (about Islam), they practice it. Once they have practiced that knowledge, they continue with practicing it rather than (waste time with) the people. The people misses these scholars not being among them and looks for them. When the scholars know they are being sought after, they run away, being afraid of losing something from their Islam (i.e., practice)."

Fudayl Ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "If you saw a scholar or a worshipper taking pleasure at being mentioned in front of the rulers and the children of the world (about how good Allah had allowed them to become, in terms of knowledge or action or good qualities), then know that the person is a show-off (i.e. someone doing *ar-riya'*)."

This is because sincerity is to desire, through knowledge and practice, the things which are with Allah the Most High.

his Lord in the actions? The answer is in the statement of the Blessed and Most High: ...and We turned to what they used to do and made them (like) scattered dust [Suratul-Furqaan (25):63]"

Amongst the signs of showing-off discreetly (*ar-riya' ul-khafi*) is to feel happy when praised or noticed for doing good actions. The *Salaf* used to say that this type of behaviour is worse than a major sin because to have this type of behaviour is a minor form of *shirk* (associating partners with Allah), and *shirk* is the greatest sin a person can commit. It is a sin due to which anyone who commits it never gets out of the clutches of the Hellfire if that person dies without repenting from it.

So, please let us look at our reasons for trying to learn more about Islam and our practice of it. If we find that we love people to see us (*ar-riya'*) or hear us (*as-sam'ah*) when doing something Allah likes, just for the sake of getting a pleasant reaction from them, rather than being satisfied with Allah being pleased with our action, then we should weep. We should remember that Allah turns the Earth and splits the seeds and controls and watches over everything. Just as He teaches us the correct way to behave, he can also punish and expose us in front of the others in this life and the next, for showing off instead of doing good deeds just to please Him. Only Allah can protect us from this. Thus we should ask Him to shield us not only from bad deeds but also from good ones which are turned into bad ones due to not doing them for the sake of Allah only.

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2 *Thinking before doing anything*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they paused and thought about every word and action until they knew what the Quran and *Sunnah* had to say about them. They did this to avoid the possibility that their statements or actions could be an innovation i.e., something new that was not allowed by the Quran and the *Sunnah*. Allah the Most High says, "So take what the Messenger gives you and refrain from what he forbids you."¹ Allah also says, "Let those beware who withstand the order of the Messenger lest some trial or painful punishment is inflicted on them."²

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Beware of newly invented things (that Muslims may do in matters of worship, thinking it to be a part of Islam) because every newly invented thing (*bid'ah*) is a misguidance (something which will definitely take you away from producing work which Allah loves)."³ He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "Whoever does something which does not agree with it (Islam), will be rejected (by Allah)."⁴

¹ Suratul-Hashr (59):7

² Suratul-Nur (24):63

³ Ahmad, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ad-Darimi and others

The *Salaf* would strongly urge their people to keep on concentrating on the Book (the Quran) and the *Sunnah* only, and urge them to keep away from all types of innovations in belief and worship – things which Allah and His Messenger had not given any permission for people to do.

Umar ibn-ul-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) would sometimes decide to do something and be fully determined about doing it. If it was then pointed out to him that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) had never done it nor ordered any Muslim to do it, then he would easily leave that action or give up the idea. One of the *Salaf* said, "The path of the people have been sorted by the Book and the *Sunnah*, [in the same way that] the way gold is sorted from other jewels." Every movement and stillness of the *Salaf* would be done with the intention to please Allah alone and would be done according to the just Law of Allah (*Ash-Shari'ah*). Someone can only get to this level of avoiding the bad qualities and sticking to the good ones, by studying the laws of Islam deeply and comprehensively, along with an honest intention to please Allah alone.

⁴ Muslim, al-Bukhari

3 *Trusting Allah in everything*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they never stopped trusting Allah, in their own lives and the lives of others around them. Before doing anything, they used to first ask Allah for His help. Allah came first in whatever they did. There was no one else for them. Allah says, about a believer, who was among the people of the tyrant Pharaoh, "My affair I commit to Allah, for Allah ever watches over His servants. Allah then saved him from every ill that they plotted against him, while the punishment of Allah encompassed the people of Pharaoh on all sides."¹ Allah also says, about the Messenger (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace), "Men said to them, "A great army is gathering against you - so fear them. That only increased them in faith saying: Allah is enough for us and He is the best disposer of affairs. They returned with grace and bounty from Allah. No harm ever touched them."²

This is how Allah explains that success in truth lies in entrusting matters to Him only and not handing them over to anyone else. One of the *Salaf* said, "There is nothing

that is better for the children of the scholars and the good people than praying for them in secret while, at the same time knowing that it is Allah alone that is protecting and looking after them." The following saying of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) shows a good example of how to trust in Allah with all our problems:

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) relates that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "A man from the children of Israel asked another to lend him one thousand *dinars*. The second man required witnesses, to which the first man replied that Allah is sufficient as a witness. The second man asked for a surety (*wakil*), to which the first man replied that Allah is sufficient as a surety. The second man said to the first man, "You are right!" On that he lent him some money to be repaid by a certain date. The first person, the borrower, travelled across the sea and wanted to keep his promise. However, it was impossible to find a passing boat to repay the debt on time. So he took a piece of wood, made a hole in it, placed one thousand *dinars* inside the hole along with a letter, and sealed it carefully. He took it to the sea and declared, "O Allah! You know that I borrowed one thousand *dinars* from a person. He asked me for a witness to which I replied, "Allah suffices as a witness." He agreed to You and then asked for a surety to which I replied, "Allah suffices as a surety." He was again satisfied with You. I looked for

¹ Suratul-Ghafir (40): 44-45

² Surah Aali-'Imran (3): 173-174

a boat by which to return the loan, but to no avail. So I leave You to be the guardian of this loan.” With that, the man threw the piece of wood into the sea. As it was taken by the waves of the sea, he went away, still searching for a boat returning to his land. The lender looked towards the sea that day hoping that a boat would have returned with his money only to find the piece of wood. He took it home to his family thinking it was firewood, but on examining it he found the one thousand *dinars* with the letter. By and by the borrower returned with one thousand *dinars* saying, “By Allah! I have been continually trying to find a boat to reach you with your loan, but this is the first boat I could find.” The lender asked the debtor, “Did you send anything to me?” to which the debtor replied, “Well, I have just informed you that I could not find a boat before the one I came on.” The lender then said, “Indeed Allah has brought to me what you sent in the piece of wood, so depart with your one thousand *dinars*.”³

³ Al-Bukhari and Ahmad

4 *Being the same in private and in public*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they worked very hard to keep away from hypocrisy so that their good behaviour remained the same whether in public or in private. This was the way they made sure that they would not have any actions which can expose their true nature as evil in the Afterlife.

Once Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (may Allah have mercy on him) was advised, “O Umar, beware of being the friend of Allah in open, while being his enemy in secret. If one’s nature in open and secret are not the same, then he is a hypocrite, and the hypocrites occupy the lowest level in Hellfire.”

On the same note, but with a different example, one of the *Salaf* once said, “Beware of hypocritical fear!” On being asked, “What is hypocritical fear?” He replied, “When your body is seen to fear whereas your heart does not fear.”

So let us search ourselves. Are we the same person whether in the open or in our privacy? Increase in seeking Allah's forgiveness knowing that whoever displays to the people what is not in the heart is like a hypocrite.

The following are some of the main qualities which Allah the Most High teaches that the hypocrites have:

1. A lazy attitude towards prayer (*salah*) and little remembrance of Allah during the prayer.

When they stand for prayer, they stand lazily; to be seen by the people, but little do they hold Allah in remembrance.¹

2. They enjoin what is bad and forbid what is good.

The hypocrites both men and women, proceed one from another. They enjoin the wrong and forbid the right and they withhold their hands (from spending in the cause of Allah). They forget Allah so Allah has forgotten them. Lo! The hypocrites, they are the transgressors.²

3. Their taking sides with and making friends with those among the disbelievers who are against Islam and the interests of the Muslims, as the Most High has said:

Bear unto the hypocrites the tidings that for them are a painful doom. That who choose disbelievers as their friends instead of the believers, is it honour they seek with them? Indeed! All honour is with Allah.³

4. Their disapproval of Allah's decision.

When it is said to them, come to what has been revealed and come to the Messenger, you see the hypocrites turn away from you with disgust.⁴

5. Their lying, treachery and deception and insult during quarrels.

The Messenger (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever has the following four qualities will be a pure hypocrite, and whoever has one of them will possess a characteristic of hypocrisy until he gives it up. Whenever he speaks he lies. Whenever he promises he betrays. Whenever he makes a covenant he proves treacherous. Whenever he quarrels he is insulting."⁵

¹ Suratun-Nisa (4): 142

² Suratut-Tawbah (9): 67

³ Suratun-Nisa (4): 138-139

⁴ Suratun-Nisa (4): 61

⁵ Al-Bukhari, Muslim and an-Nasai

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5 *Patience when treated badly*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was their patience over the unfairness and tyranny of those in authority. They would recognise that such troubles were far less severe than what their own sins had merited. They used to look at their own faults before the faults of anyone else. They were mostly concerned with their own faults so that they did not see any fault in others. Instead, whenever it occurred to them that any particular person had a fault; they would make excuses for that person and felt that they did not deserve to say anything, because they were not perfect themselves.

In this way, they balanced their behaviour by reminding themselves of their own faults, when others did wrong to them. The Most High said, "Thus do We make the wrongdoers turn to each other because of what they earn."¹

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Hajjaj Ath-Thaqafi was a tribulation from Allah in accordance with the people's sinning."

¹ Suratul-An'am (6): 129

Another person wrote to Muhammad ibn Yusuf (may Allah have mercy on him) complaining about their leader's oppression. So he replied, "We have received your letter, but dear brother, it is not beyond your knowledge that the sinner has no right to complain about his penalty. All that I see is that you are in the misery of sins."

Allah could punish a wrongdoer (*dhalim*) with the hand of another wrongdoer to eventually drive them both into the Fire. However, helping the wrongdoers or inclining towards them is forbidden.

Do not incline to those who do wrong or the fire will seize you.²

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "Whoever aids an oppressor or taught him an argument to cancel the right of an ordinary Muslim, has drawn the anger of Allah upon himself."

The only exception to this is where people are forced to harm another person against their will.

² Surah Hud (11): 113

6 *Accompanying the righteous*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was their desire for the sake of Allah to support the pure *Shari'ah* and their sense of dishonour if anyone committed something forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace).

Thus they would only do an action or accompany anyone, for Allah alone, never hating or loving anyone for a worldly reason.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever has three things will find the sweetness of faith (*iman*); that Allah and His Messenger are more beloved to him than anything else; he loves a person just for the sake of Allah; he hates to return to disbelief the way he hates to be thrown into the fire."¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "Whoever loves for Allah and hates for Allah, gives for Allah and withholds for Him, has completed his faith (*iman*)."²

¹ Al-Bukhari and at-Tirmidhi

² Abu Dawud

One of the *Salaf* said, "Accompanying the good people gives rise to goodness in the heart." (Also see chapter 1 where this subject is addressed from the viewpoint of the knowledgeable people wishing to keep in good company, for fear of losing their Islam.)

Ahmad ibn Harb (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "There is nothing better for a Muslim's heart than to mix with the good people and to watch their actions, while there is nothing more harmful to the heart than mixing with the sinners and watching their actions."

7 *Preferring the Hereafter to this world*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they maintained a dignified seriousness about themselves so that they neither laughed too much nor boasted about worldly possessions and gains. Any type of worldly gain e.g., clothes, riding animals, marriages would cause them to keep themselves away from spending more time than they should on these things. They were afraid that such temporary enjoyments would take away from their pleasures in the Hereafter with Allah.

Umar ibn-ul-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "If I was not afraid that my good deeds would be reduced, I would have taken part in your luxurious ways, but I heard Allah rebuke some people (who are being sent to the Hellfire) saying: 'You received your good things in your worldly life and you took your satisfaction out of them.'"¹

The people of Allah only differ from others regarding how

they prepare for the Afterlife; in how they ready themselves for its conditions.

So let us reflect upon our soul and see how we are absorbed in negligence, unaware of the things that bring us close to Allah the Most High. Let us increase in seeking His forgiveness.

One of the *Salaf* said, "If it can be that no one beats you to Allah, then do so."

Another person said, "If you see someone competing to overtake you in the worldly things then compete to overtake him in the Islam."

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) was described by some as follows, "By Allah! If he arrived, it was as if he had returned from a beloved's burial, and if he withdrew, it was as if the fire was above his head. When he sat, it was as if he was a convict waiting for his head to be toppled. In the morning it was as if he had arrived from his Afterlife, and in the evening it was as if sickness had worn him away."

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "I have come to know that one of the righteous people persevered that Allah should not see him laughing until he knew which of the two abodes he would be in; Paradise or Hell." He then said, "He

¹ Suratul-Ahqaf (46): 20

was certainly determined – may Allah have mercy on him – and he fulfilled his ambition, never being seen laughing until he met Allah.”

8

Preferring death over Allah's anger

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would wish for death if they feared becoming involved in what Allah hates. They would know they were being hateful by such signs in themselves as continuous sinning.

Initially the believer should not wish for death. A believer has only to benefit from a long life. Because of this, one person from the *Salaf* said, “Everyday the believer lives there is profit for him.” Death becomes desirable when a Muslim fears such tribulation that prevents him from following Islam fundamentally.

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, “Let none of you wish for death. If he is given to doing good deeds then he could have the chance to increase (in goodness) but if not, then he could reproach himself (i.e. repent).”¹

¹ A portion of a *hadeeth* reported by al-Bukhari and an-Nasai

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) also reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Let none of you wish for death nor supplicate for it before it comes, since if one of you dies, his actions come to an end, but a believer's life can only increase in goodness."²

However, if the troubles grow harder, making the believer worried about his Islam, then it is recommended for him to wish and ask for death.

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "A time will come when death will be more beloved to the scholars (*Ulema*) than red gold, until a person will pass a Muslim brother's grave and say: 'If only I was in his place!'"

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "The elite of this world have gone and only the rotten remain. Death today is a prize for every Muslim."

² Muslim. Bukhari and Muslim collected on the authority of Anas ibn Malik: Let none of you wish for death because of some evil befalling him, but if you have to do so then say, "O Allah! Let me live as long as life is better for me, and let me die when death is better for me."

9 *Fear of sinning before and after any action*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was their deep fear of Allah at the start and end of any action. In the beginning they would fear that the action would involve them in sin and punishment, and at the end of the action they would fear they would be glorified and praised. Thus they would fear dying on evil. Allah the Most High says, "For the one who fears the standing in front of his Lord is two gardens."¹ He also said, "Fear Me, all of you, if you are truly believers."²

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever is afraid will set out at nightfall, and whoever sets out at nightfall will reach home. Verily the merchandise of Allah is valuable; the merchandise of Allah is Paradise."³

Abu Turab an-Nakhshabi (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "If a person resolved to leave sinning, Allah would send him reinforcements from all sides. The blackness of the heart

¹ Surah Ar-Rahman (55): 46

² Surah Aali-Imran (3): 175

³ At-Tirmidhi and al-Hakim

is indicated by three things. Not to find any escape from sinning, nor a place for obedience to occur, nor a haven for the sermon that warns.”

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, “From the signs that one has drowned in sins is lack of delight in fasting during the day and praying during the night.”

One of the *Salaf* said, “If the only benefit of obedience was light appearing on the face and its brilliance, gaining love in the heart, strength in the limbs and security of the soul (*nafs*), all this would have been enough for leaving sins. And if all sins do is only produce ugliness in the face, darkness in the heart and fear over the soul, then all this would have been enough for leaving sins. For both the obedient and disobedient person, Allah has left indications and signs to please one and make the other sorrowful.”

Allah the Most High said, “(Those who say) Allah is our Lord then they were upright, the angels descend upon them saying do not fear nor grieve.”⁴

Concerning the above *Ayah* one from the *Salaf* said, “The angels only say that to the one who prolonged his fear of Allah and his sorrow for his faults or for what he neglected. The one who did not fear Allah nor grieved of what good he had given up, (through his bad deeds), would not have these words said to him (i.e., at death).”

⁴ Suratul-Fussilat : 30

10

Fear of treating anyone in a bad way

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was their fearfulness before their Lord that He might punish them for treating themselves and others badly, even if they only harmed someone to the extent of just a pin prick. They would bring about this fear especially in order not to think too much of their own good deeds but in order to deem them leaving much to be desired.

When they thought of others and their rights they would become even more fearful and restrained. This is because they never thought that on the Day of Judgement they would have enough good deeds from which to give to those whom they had wronged on earth. Perhaps on the Day of Judgment one of those disputants would demand his full right and remain unhappy even after taking all of the

wrongdoer's good reward as compensation. Such a dispute could be over a single offence over a monetary transaction or because of an act to destroy someone's image in front of the people in this world.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever has done a wrong to his brother with regards to his wealth or honour then he must solve it today, before there is neither *dinar* nor *dirham*, except for good and bad deeds."¹

On the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "Do you know the one who is (truly) broke (or the poor man)?" They replied, "To us the broke is the one who has neither money nor belongings." The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) then replied, "The broke in my nation is the one who will come on the Day of Judgment with his prayers and charity (*zakah*) and fasting while having abused one person and consumed the wealth of another, and spilled the blood of somebody else. So, each of the people he has done wrong to will receive from his good deeds. But, if his good deeds run out before he could repay their rights, he will then take from their sins; being thrown at him. Then he would be thrown in the Fire."²

¹ Al-Bukhari and at-Tirmidhi
² Muslim and at-Tirmidhi

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "It has been narrated that when the following *Ayah* was revealed to the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace), "Whoever does bad will be recompensed for it and will not find anyone besides Allah as a friend nor supporter",³ Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "By Allah! This verse has been revealed as a terrible blow."

If Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) who was declared as one of the inhabitants of Paradise said that then what should those besides him say? O believers! Let us think deeply and be on guard so that we find we are saved from the punishment of a mighty day.

³ Suratur-Nisa (4): 123

11

Having regrets when ill

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would keep their hearts ready for death whenever they were sick. They understood that due to their illnesses that they might suddenly leave this world before repenting satisfactorily or without fulfilling the rights of either their Lord or His creatures. They would feel as if they were journeying towards the Afterlife as sinners, like slaves who had escaped from their Master after frequent disobedience only to be captured from all sides and then returned to him.

Some people visited Utbah Al-Ghulam (may Allah have mercy on him) at his death bed and asked him, "How do you find yourself?" So he recited the following (poetry):

"I have slipped out of the world,
My Day of Judgment has come;
In the morning the bearers of my funeral will be few;
In a hurry my family digs my grave to make;

My leaving and my rush to it as an honour to me;
As if my face they had never known;
In the morning my day comes as my night."

When death came to Ibrahim an-Nakha'i (may Allah have mercy on him) he wept. On being asked the reason he replied, "I am waiting for a messenger to come from my Lord to welcome me either to Paradise or Hellfire."

So let us reflect over our soul, and know that we are constantly on the verge of death as we do not even own our next breath of air. Let us increase in seeking forgiveness throughout the night and at the ends of the day and Allah will be our Guardian, yours and mine, and give us guidance, and the One Who will grant us the ways to His Mercy.

12

Being reminded of death due to funerals

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was their frequent reflection over death. They would weep and be concerned when they saw anything related to a funeral. They would remember death, its agony and be afraid of an evil end for themselves. This would make their hearts tremble. When Abu Hurairah would see a funeral (*janazah*) he would say to it, "Pass on to your Lord and immediately after you, we too will be gone (and join you)."

Amash (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "We used to attend the funerals and not know whom we should console, because of the extent of the sorrow that came over all the people."

Thabit (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "We would witness

the funerals and all whom we would see would be covering themselves up and weeping."

That was because they would reflect upon their own funerals. Rather than weeping over the dead person they would weep over themselves.

For the one to whom death will be his wrestler, the grave his couch, the worm his friend, *munkar* and *nakir* his companions, the tomb his house, the heart of the earth his home, the arising his appointment, Paradise or Hell his harvest, then the person who has something good with him does not think of anything but that, and likewise is his preparation. Let us realise that well and think deeply as they used to do. Let us increase in crying to Allah for our carelessness and become full of remorse through such self-reflection. Because in front of us are terrific scenes beyond description. We ask Allah to protect us in the world and in the Hereafter.

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18

Showing good behaviour to everyone

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would behave well towards the young, non-relatives and the generally ignorant, let alone towards the elders, relatives and the knowledgeable. They would be well behaved towards all.

Allah said to Moses and Harun (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them), "And say to him (Pharaoh) a soft word."¹

This is notwithstanding the fact that Pharaoh was among the most corrupt disbelievers. The *Salaf* agreed that a high status depends on good character and manners.

Among the principles of manners they followed were that they were the first in being aware of their own weaknesses

continued on page 41

¹ Surah TaHa (20): 44

13

Forgiving and overlooking harms

As we have previously detailed in chapter 5 from the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would pardon and overlook the harms endured at the hands of the others. Due to their utter respect of Allah and trust in His mercy and justice they would graciously pardon harms such as being hit, or robbed or their honour trampled.

Pardon them and overlook – Allah loves those who do good.¹

... and those who restrain their anger and pardon the people, Allah loves those who do good.²

They adopted the pattern of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) who never fought back on his own behalf but only when the boundaries set by Allah were crossed.

¹ Suratul-Majidah (5): 13

² Surah Aali-'Imran (3): 134

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¹ Suratul-Majidah (5): 13
² Surah Aali-'Imran (3): 134

Whoever adopts these noble manners is closer to the Mercy of Allah the Most Merciful, His pardon and forgiveness, as mentioned in the two authentic collections of "Sahih al-Bukhari" and "Sahih Muslim".

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) reported that once there was a merchant who would lend money to people. If he saw anyone in difficult circumstances he would say to his children, "Pardon him his debt, perhaps Allah will pardon us." Then Allah did pardon him.³

Ja'far ibn Muhammad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "For me to regret after having pardoned someone is more beloved to me than to feel regret after punishing someone."

Qatadah was asked, "Which person has the highest standing?" He replied, "The one most abundant in his pardon."

It is reported on the authority of one of the *Salaf*, that his slave once enraged him terribly. He considered taking revenge on which the slave said, "Those who restrain their anger." He replied, "I have restrained my anger." The slave then continued, "And those who pardon people." So the man said, "I have pardoned you." The slave then said, "And Allah loves those who do good." To which the man said, "Go! For the sake of Allah I have freed you."

³ Al-Bukhari and Muslim

14 *Increasing the sanctity of Muslims and loving for them all goodness*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was their magnifying the Muslims' sanctity and loving for them all goodness, since their sanctity is from the symbols of Allah.

Whoever honours the symbols of Allah, such is from the hearts of piety (*taqwa*).¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) magnified the Muslims. He said during the farewell pilgrimage (*Hajj*), "Verily your blood, your wealth is sacred like the sacredness of this day of yours, in this month of yours, in this city of yours."² He (may Allah honour him and grant

¹ Suratul-Hajj (22): 32

² A section from the Khutbatul-wida' (farewell speech). Also in Muslim and Abu Dawud

him blessed peace) also said, "A Muslim is sacred to another Muslim, his blood, wealth and honour."³

Abu Bakr as-Siddique (may Allah be pleased with him) would say, "Let none of you patronise another Muslim, since a small Muslim is to Allah big."

Abdullah ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "The best deed is to show generosity towards the one with whom he sits."

When he looked at the Ka'ba he would say, "Verily Allah has sanctified you, ennobled you and honoured you, but the believer is more sacred to Allah, the Most High, than you."

Ikrimah (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Beware of harming any of the scholars, because whoever does so has harmed the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace)."

So let us think about ourselves for a moment. Have we sanctified the reputation of the scholars and the righteous, let alone that of the ordinary Muslims? Or have we belittled them, disreputed them and blackened their honour thus becoming one of the wicked ones?

³ Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud

15

Showing patience when annoyed by their wives

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was their patience when irritated by their wives. They would realize that every difference that appeared from their wives was a picture of their own behaviour with their Lord. When he differs with his Lord's command, his wife differs with him.

One of the *Salaf* said, "I disobey Allah to find its effects in the way even my animal behaves (towards me) and how my wife treats me."

They used to give their wives their due and they would not be unjust when their wives would conflict with them.

Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "That which gives someone contentment is five things. That his wife is agreeable, his children are loyal, his brothers are pious, his neighbours are righteous, and in his provision from his Lord."

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "The best of you is the best towards his family (i.e., wife), and I am the best among you to my family."¹

Ahmad ibn Harb (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "If six qualities are found together in a woman, her goodness is perfected. That she guards the five prayers, yields to her husband, pleases her Lord, guards her tongue from backbiting and gossip, forsakes worldly possessions, and remains patient after a tragedy."

Their manners towards their wives included their patience in improving them practically, as Allah the Most High has said, "Order your family to perform the prayers and be patient over the matter."²

They practiced the advice of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) to his nation (*Ummah*), "Beware of Allah with regards to the women, because you have taken them by the trust of Allah and made lawful their private parts by the word of Allah."³

¹ At-Tirmidhi

² Surah Taha (20): 132

³ This is a section from the Farewell Speech.

16

Running away from leadership

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they gave up seeking leadership, so that they were not unexpectedly given priority over other people in any matter. They were afraid that they will have to say, "I am not fit to be your *imam*," thus forcing the reply, "You are not only fit to be *imam* but much more too!"

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "O Abdur-Rahman, do not ask for leadership (*amir*). If you were given that after your asking for it, then you would be held responsible, but if you were appointed without any request for it, then you would be aided."¹

He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "Indeed you will be eager for leadership, but regret will follow on the Day of Arising (because of it)."²

Sufyan Ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) would say,

¹ Al-Bukhari and Muslim

² Al-Bukhari

"Whoever seeks leadership before it comes to him, it flees from him losing much goodness."

He also said, "Do not seek leadership except after fighting the soul (i.e., fighting your desires and self) for seventy years."

Muslim ibn Qutaibah (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "I have met people who considered leadership as the biggest of trials. But today people are looking for it."

If one of their friends became an *Amir* they would pray, "O Allah! Make him forget us until he neither knows us nor do we know him."

17 *Advising one another*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would advise one another sincerely. Remarkably the elder person would not be offended if advised by the young one. The young people would know how to advise the elders with good manners, humbly and respectfully while the elders would accept such advice in the best way and with thanks.

This is opposite to the situation we see from the light-headed people we have today. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Religion (*Deen*) is advice/sincerity (*nasiha*). They asked, "To whom O Messenger of Allah?" He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims and their public."¹

They used to accept advice and thank the adviser. One of them would not think that he had repaid his adviser fully even if he was benevolent to him all his life. That is because the matters related to the Afterlife cannot be compared to

¹ Muslim, Abu Dawud and an-Nasai

the vain and temporary things of this world.

A person once said to Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him), "Advise me." He replied to the man, "Exalt the commands of Allah wherever you are, and Allah will exalt you wherever you are."

They would also write to each other even if they rarely saw one another being far apart in their lands. The one who was counselled would accept the advice and thank his counsellor though things have become quite the opposite today. Thus you could rarely advise anyone today who did not complain about your own faults or insult you.

Tawus wrote to Makhul (may Allah have mercy on him) and he said to him, "After greetings – My brother! Beware of thinking that you have a high standing in the sight of Allah, because of what you see of your actions. The one who thinks that about himself moves onto the Afterlife empty-handed. The people may treat you with a lot of respect because of your good deeds but that is so that your reward is quickly given to you in this world."

O believer! Let us know these facts, advise ourselves and then our fellow worshippers, whether in words or in writing, but beware of being offended if someone advises us.

and faults and seeing correctness in others. They knew that if someone considered himself as perfect while seeing others' shortcomings, this gave rise to pride; may Allah protect us from that.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "I have only been sent to perfect good manners."²

Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "The people who are most learned about Allah are those who respect most the people of *Laa ilaaha illallah* (there is none worthy of worship except Allah)."

Bakr ibn Abdullah al-Muzani (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "If you see someone older than you then respect him saying, 'He has beaten me to Islam and righteous action'. If you see someone younger than you then respect him saying to yourself, 'I have beaten him in sins'. If the people honour you then say, 'That is from the grace of Allah, but I do not deserve it'. If they degrade you then say, 'This happened as a consequence of a previous sin.' Know that even if you throw a pebble at your neighbour's dog, then you have harmed him (which is forbidden)."

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19 *Being in awe of Allah*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would maintain deep fear and awe of Allah, the Most High, so that they did not end their lives on evil. They would be like this so that they were screened from the prospect of being placed in the Fire by Allah. One of them would become so engrossed in thought and sorrow that he would become unaware of where he was.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Actions are by their ends."¹ He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "A man continues to do the actions of the People of Paradise until there is only an arm's length between him and it, but his book overtakes him and he does the actions of the People of Hell-fire and then enters it."²

Today people's minds neglect this. Even Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said, "A person does the actions of the People of Paradise for a long time, but really he is from the People of Hell-fire!"

¹ Al-Bukhari and Ahmad

² Al-Bukhari, Muslim and at-Tirmidhi

How many faces struck with awe fell due to the reward of their actions, tired and worn out, entering a blazing fire! How many people's boats approach a safe beach, but when about to dock, a wave comes to play with him and he drowns! All worshippers face this risk.

Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) used to say, "O the Turner of the hearts, steady my heart upon your *Deen*." So I asked him, "O Messenger of Allah! We have believed in you and in what you have come with, so do you fear for us?" He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Yes! The hearts are between two fingers of the fingers of Allah. He turns them as He wishes."³

Mutarraf ibn Abdullah (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "I am not surprised at the one who is destroyed, how he was destroyed, but I am amazed at the one who is saved, how he was saved! Allah never granted a blessing greater than the gift of Islam."

³ At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah. Muslim collected the same supplication on the authority of Abdullah ibn 'Amr.

19 *Being in awe of Allah*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would maintain deep fear and awe of Allah, the Most High, so that they did not end their lives on evil. They would be like this so that they were screened from the prospect of being placed in the Fire by Allah. One of them would become so engrossed in thought and sorrow that he would become unaware of where he was.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Actions are by their ends."¹ He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "A man continues to do the actions of the People of Paradise until there is only an arm's length between him and it, but his book overtakes him and he does the actions of the People of Hell-fire and then enters it."²

Today people's minds neglect this. Even Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her) said, "A person does the actions of the People of Paradise for a long time, but really he is from the People of Hell-fire!"

¹ Al-Bukhari and Ahmad

² Al-Bukhari, Muslim and at-Tirmidhi

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20 Performing the night prayer

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* would be their continued practice of the night prayer (*tahajjud*) whether in summer or in winter. They would act according to the advice of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace), "Observe the night prayer because it was the habit of the righteous people before you, and it is something that draws you near to your Lord. It wipes away sins, prevents one from sinning and expels sicknesses from the body."¹

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) used to stand up for the Night-prayer when everyone had settled down to sleep. A humming could be heard from him until dawn like the droning of bees.

Abdul-Aziz ibn abu Dawud (may Allah have mercy on him) would spread out his bed and put his hand on it saying, "How soft you are! But the bed of Paradise is softer than you!" Then he would stand to pray until *Fajr*.

¹ At-Tirmidhi

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) used to pray until his feet would crack and his shins would swell. So it would be said to him, "You are doing this while your past and future sins have been forgiven?" So the Messenger of Allah replied, "Should I not then be a grateful slave?"²

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever left the Night-prayer, it was because of a sin he had previously done." He also used to repeat, "The night prayer is only heavy upon him whose sins have burdened him." He also said, "A person does a sin because of which he is prevented from praying the Night-prayer." Lastly, "If you are unable to fast during the day and pray during the night then know that you have been prevented – your sins and mistakes have chained you down!"

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned in his book "*Az-Zuhd*" on the authority of the wife of Masruq (may Allah have mercy on him) that she said, "Masruq never lived without his lower legs swelling up due to the length of his prayers (*salat*). I used to sit behind him weeping out of compassion for him."

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² Al-Bukhari, Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasai

21 *Taking care to be like the believers*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would constantly search their souls to develop the qualities of the believers for themselves, and to give up the qualities of the hypocrites. Indeed one is the opposite of the other. A summary of the believers' qualities is mentioned in the Quran where it says, "Those that turn (to Allah) in repentance; that serve Him, and praise Him; that wander in devotion to the cause of Allah; that bow down and prostrate themselves (in prayer); that enjoin good and forbid evil; and observe the limits set by Allah – so proclaim the glad tidings to the believers."¹ Also, "The believers will be successful. Those who humble themselves in their prayers; who avoid vain talk; who are active in deeds of charity, who abstain from sex except with those joined to them in marriage or (the captives) whom their right hands possess, for (in their case) they are free from blame. But those whose desires exceed those limits are transgressors. Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants; who (strictly)

¹ Suratul-Tawbah (9): 112

guard their prayers: these will be the heirs who will inherit Paradise, to dwell therein forever."²

In the *hadith*, "None of you truly believe until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."³

"By Allah he does not believe! By Allah he does not believe! By Allah he does not believe!" He was asked, "Who O Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace)?" He said, "Whoever does not safeguard his neighbour from his harms."⁴

Yahya ibn Muadh (may Allah have mercy on him) gathered the qualities of the believers in one of his essays as follows, "It is to be full of modesty, and to be harmless too. It is to be full of goodness and not to be corrupt. It is to be truthful, for the words to be little and for one to be plentiful in good action. It is to have little slip-ups and not to be extreme in anything. It is to be good to one's relatives, building closeness between them. It is to be dignified and grateful and to be full of contentment if Allah restricts some provision. It is to be forbearing and friendly towards his brothers and to be compassionate and chaste. Not to curse, swear, insult, backbite, nor to gossip. Not to be hasty, envious, hateful, arrogant nor vain. Not to lean towards worldliness, nor to extend long hopes and wishes. Not to sleep too much nor to be absent-minded, nor to show-off nor be hypocritical. Not

² Suratul-Mu'minun (23): 1-11

³ Al-Bukhari, Muslim, an-Nasai, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah

⁴ Al-Bukhari and Muslim. Muslim's version reads: He will not enter Paradise if he does not spare his neighbour from his harms.

to be selfish, but to be soft and cheerful, not servile. Loving for the sake of Allah, being pleased for His sake and being angry only for His sake. His provision is *taqwa* (reverential fear of Allah). His worries are what will happen to him in the Afterlife. His friends remind him. His beloved is His Protector and Master. His struggle is for the Afterlife."

Fudayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "A believer plants a palm tree and fears that thorns will grow. The hypocrites plant thorns expecting ripe dates to grow!"

O believers! Let us realise these facts and search ourselves carefully before our death. Let us weep over our souls if we find the immorality of the hypocrites in them. Increase in seeking His Forgiveness. All praise belongs to Allah Lord of the worlds.

22 Giving most importance to working for the Hereafter

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would always give priority to their works for the Afterlife over the works for this world. Thus one of them would give priority to his portion of remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*) after the *Fajr* prayer over all other preoccupations. They would give priority to *tahajjud* (Night-prayer) on a cold night over sleeping under a warm blanket. That is how the *Salaf* gradually conducted their affairs. "Whoever reaches the morning and his worries are the world, then he is separated from their path. Whoever wishes for the passing things of this world We readily grant him what We will for whom We like. Then We appoint for him Hell. He will burn therein, disgraced and rejected. Whoever desires and strives for the Afterlife, striving as one should, whilst believing, such are the ones whose striving will be thanked."¹

¹ Surah Bani Israel (17): 18-19

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever's worries were the Afterlife, Allah puts richness in his heart. He corrects his affairs and the world will be forced to come to him. But whoever's greatest worries were the world, Allah puts poorness in front of his eyes. His affairs are put in disarray, and no worldly gain will come to him except what has already been written for him."²

Malik ibn Dinar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever proposed to the world, know that the world would not be satisfied until he gave up all his *Deen* as dowry."

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "The Afterlife comes approaching; the world passes on behind. So be the children of the Afterlife, not the children of the world. Because today there is action but no account, but tomorrow there will be accounting but no opportunity to do any action."

² At-Tirmidhi

23 *Glorifying Allah and sending greetings upon the Messenger of Allah*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would not neglect the remembrance of Allah the Most High (*dhikr*) or to send prayer upon the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) whenever seated in a gathering.

Allah the Most High has said, "Greater indeed is the remembrance of Allah."¹ "Indeed in the remembrance of Allah do the hearts find rest."²

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "The likeness of the one who remembers his Lord and the one who does not is similar to the living and the dead."³

¹ Suratul-Ankabut (29): 45

² Suratur-Ra'd (13): 28

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Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Allah the Most High has been easy on us by saying, "So remember Me, I will remember you"⁵, without specifying any place. If He had stated a certain place, it would have been obligatory for us to reach that place even if it were a hundred years away, like we have been called to the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) – so praise belongs to Allah."

Fudayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "If you remember the creation (e.g. gossip about any person), then remember Allah the Most High. Remembering Him is the medicine for remembering His creation."

Abul-Mulaih (may Allah have mercy on him) would feel joy and happiness when remembering Allah. He would say, "My joy is in my Lord's remembering me. He the Glorified and Most High have said: Remember Me, I will remember you." If he was walking a path absent-mindedly he would begin to praise Allah and remember Him even if it was only for a little while. He would then say, "Verily I love for all the places I pass that I remember Allah in order for such to

⁴ Abu Dawud, Ahmad and Abu Nu'aim

⁵ Suratul-Baqarah (2): 152

give witness in my favour on the Day of Arising."

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24 *Having soft hearts*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they possessed tender hearts and would weep much out of their feeling of deficiency in their duties towards Allah the Most High, so that He may have mercy upon them.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "If you knew what I knew, you would have laughed little and wept much." The companions of Allah's Messenger (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) thereupon sobbed while covering their faces.¹

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "I saw the companions of Allah's Messenger (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace), but today I see no one like them! They would arise in the morning dusty, pale with dishevelled hair. Between their two eyes would be a mark like a goat's knee because they had spent the night in prostration and long standings, rolling up and down between their feet and their foreheads. So if the morning came, they would stand steadily as a (swaying) tree does on a windy day. Their eyes would be

¹ Al-Bukhari and at-Tirmidhi. *Khanin* means weeping with the noise spreading from the nose.

bathed in tears. By Allah! It is as if I am now with people who have slept forgetful."

Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) had two black lines on his face from his excessive weeping. Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) had marks like a worn out shoe-lace under his eyes from his excessive weeping.

Ka'b al-Ahbar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "I prefer to weep out of the fear of Allah (even) with only one tear drop falling from my eyes rather than to spend a mountain of gold with an ungracious heart."

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) would say, "The signs of the righteous are: a pale complexion, bleary eyes, lips shrivelling from hunger, weeping, and wakefulness in prayer at night."

25 *Fearing weakness in their practice*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would consider themselves on the verge of destruction because of what they saw of their deficiencies in their works and sinfulness.

They would say, "There is hope that Allah will pardon us. That is indeed the true achievement. The worry, however, lies in the concern that He would recall our every tiny mistake and even less. This self-assessment lessens the burden of accounting on the Day of Arising. Whoever does not bring his soul to account here, he will have a long standing for accounting there!"

O You who believe! Fear Allah and let every person look to what he has sent on for tomorrow.¹

Umar ibn-ul-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Call yourselves to account before you are brought to account. Weigh them up before they are weighed, and prepare for

¹ Surat-ul-Hashr (59): 18

the greatest parade. The Day when you shall be presented, there will not be any secret of yours that will be hidden!"²

Ahmad ibn Hurmuz al A'raj (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Search yourselves concerning the ugliness you are upon. Tomorrow everyone will be raised up with those who did the same sins. Whoever fell into all sins then he will be gathered for each sin each time with the people of that sin." He used to rebuke himself saying, "A caller will call on the Day of Arising: O people who did such and such sin; arise! So, O A'raj! You will have to stand with them. Again it will be cried: O people who did that sin; arise! And you O A'raj would stand with them and everyone else who sinned."

² Surat-ul-Haaqa (69): 18

26 *Having little concern for building homes*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would care little about building homes. If one of them did build a house, he would limit himself to what he needed without decoration or going into ornamentation. That was partly because they did not have enough lawful and pure earnings but mainly because they did not extend their hopes and desires for worldly possession.

Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) drew a line and said, "This is man." He drew another line and said, "This is man's death." He then drew a line further than the second line and said, "This is his hopes. While he tries to fulfil his hopes, the closest line takes him."¹

One of the *Salaf* passed by a person who was building a house, so he recited the following poem:

¹Al-Bukhari

"Do you build houses (as if) for the immortal?
If you thought, you would see your staying there is little;
Under the shade of a stick is enough for him;
Whom one day the farewell will embrace him;"

He saw his friend who had spent a large amount of money for his house and told him, "If you had rented your house, you would have only spent one tenth of what you have spent on it now."

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27

Not treasuring the world

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would make the world itself insignificant as the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "What is the world compared to the Afterlife except like one of you was to put his finger in a sea and see how much water it retains!"¹ He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "If the world meant as much as a wing of a mosquito to Allah, he would not have let the disbeliever take even a sip of drink of water (from it)."²

Malik ibn Dinar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Beware of the sorcerer who enchants the hearts of the scholars keeping them away from Allah the Most High, i.e. the world. Its nature is uglier than the magic Harut (Gog) and Marut (Magog) came with, because their magic separated a man from his wife, whereas the world separates a slave from his Master."

¹ Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and ibn Majah

² At-Tirmidhi

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "We have met a certain people to whom the world was like something entrusted to them which they would have to give back to its owner. They saw that they did not own anything in it, as a result, they travelled lightly onto the Afterlife."

Abdullah ibn Mubarak (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "The world is the believer's prison. The best action in the prison is patience and control of one's anger. The believer has no country in the world. His land will be there tomorrow in the Afterlife."³

One of the *Salaf* used to say, "If you want to be close to Allah then put an iron wall between yourself and your desires."

³ The aim (and Allah knows best) is that the believer does not aspire for the world as in the statement of the Most High: That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth: and the end is (best) for the righteous. [Suratul-Qasas (28): 83] But Allah will elevate him in this world and the Hereafter and give him honour in this world as for the Hereafter.

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28 *Earning and eating Halal*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would not waste anything *halal* (good and pure) whenever they found it. That is because the *halal* is rare at all times and obtained according to the levels of the people. They would consider earning *halal* money above all other things for their livelihood as the most important thing after worship because they were without a doubt the children of the Hereafter.

Pure actions which are correct for the Hereafter do not come from the one who eats *haram* (forbidden) or doubtful food, because the one who eats *haram* his actions prove to be *haram*, while the one who eats doubtful food, doubtful actions come from him. Even if the one who eats *haram* wanted to obey Allah he will find he is hardly able to do so. That is why Allah the Most High has ordered the messengers and the believers with the same thing with regards to eating *halal* and pure food. The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Allah the Most High is good and accepts only that which is good. Allah has ordered the

believers to do that which he ordered the messengers. The Most High has said, "O Messengers! Eat of the good things and do rightful actions"¹, and Allah the Most High has said, "O you who believe! Eat of the pure things that We have provided you with."^{2 3}

So eating pure and lawful food is the greatest thing to help you in doing good actions and as a condition before the acceptance of your supplications.

Yunus ibn Ubaidur-Rahman (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Today there is even less than a *dirham* which is pure. If we found it we would seek to cure our sick with it."

¹ Suratul-Mujminun (23): 51
² Suratul-Baqarah (2): 172
³ Muslim and at-Tirmidhi

29

Showing modesty about their actions

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would think little of their own actions regarding the reward they thought they had earned, even if they had the actions of all mankind and *jinn* put together. They would never think that they had fulfilled an atom's weight of the rights of Allah.

One of the *Salaf* said, "The rights of Allah are heavier than a slave can carry out and His favours are more than one can keep count. So enter the morning repenting and enter the evening repenting."

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) would pray until his feet would split. It was said to him, "Do you do that when your past and future sins have been forgiven?" So he replied, "Should I not be a grateful slave?"¹

¹ Al-Bukhari, Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasai

Thabit al-Banani (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "O Lord! If you permitted that prayers were performed at anyone's grave then let it be mine."

Some people entered into the company of Junayd (may Allah have mercy on him) while he was breathing his last. He was asked, "Now?" To which he replied, "Now my record is being opened up."

One of the *Salaf* would look forward to the night time as it approached so that he could seclude himself in the presence of his Lord. The day would make him sad because he feared the people would keep him away from the worship of his Lord.

The people had reached a peak of sound heartedness. If it was said to them, "The Day of Arising is to be tomorrow, there would be no change in their states of mind."

Muhammad ibn Abu Umairah (may Allah be pleased with him) who was a companion of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "If a slave fell on his face in obedience to Allah from the day he was born until the day he died as an old man, he would think that to be little on that Day wishing he had increased in good deeds as he would love to be increased in reward."

30

Fearing mistakes in knowledge and guidance

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would have great fear that mistakes would creep into their knowledge or practice or in their directing the nation (*Ummah*) to what is good in this world and the Hereafter. Do not think that any of them loved to be raised in rank in any worldly matter. They hated giving religious verdicts (*fatawah*) because the one who gives the verdict (*fatwah*) has put himself between Allah and His worshippers.

Do not say about that which your tongues put forth falsely "This is lawful (*halal*) and this is forbidden (*haram*)", so as to invent lies against Allah. Those who invent lies about Allah will never prosper.¹

Abdur-Rahman ibn Abi Lailah (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

¹ Suratur-Nahl (16): 116

"I have met 120 companions of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace). None of them spoke without wishing his brother's speech would be sufficient, and none of them gave a *fatwah* without wishing his brother would suffice him in it."

Fudayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "It is more beloved to me to spend *dinars* (money) on a people than to spend my speech on them, and therefore easier on my soul."

Some people requested that Sufyan ibn Uyainah (may Allah have mercy on him) sat with them to give a lecture, but he refused them by saying, "I am not of the right type to relate to you knowledge or for you to listen. The example of you and I is similar to the saying: Expose all your faults and then let us hide them for one another!"

Abu Muslim al-Khawlani (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Many people live among the people just with their knowledge, thereby destroying their souls", i.e., with vanity and egoism.

Abu Hazim (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "The scholars of our time have been content with speech and with no practice!"

The *Salaf* used to practice but not speak. After them the people practiced and spoke being followed by a people who spoke but did not practice. There will come a time when people will neither speak nor practice.

Abdur-Rahim as-Sulami (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "We met people who used to learn ten verses (*ayat*) at a time the Quran followed by another ten. They would not move to the next ten without practicing the first ten."

Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak (may Allah have mercy on him) reported on the authority of Muhammad ibn Ziyad that he said, "I saw Abu Umamah speaking to a person who had been weeping and crying to Allah in prostration in the mosque. He said to him, 'You would have been your true self had this been your house!' Also, it was said to ash-Sha'bi (may Allah have mercy on him), 'Deliver your verdict to us O scholar (*Alim*)!' He replied to them, 'Do not say scholar to the likes of me, but the *Alim* is the one who humbles his joints due to the submissive fear (*khushu'*) of Allah."

Sufyan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever's knowledge makes him weep then he is a scholar (*Alim*). Allah the Most High said, 'Verily those who were given knowledge before it, when it is recited to them they fall down on their faces in humble prostration.'² He also said, 'When the verses (*ayat*) of *Ar-Rahman* (The Most Merciful) is recited to them they fall in prostration weeping.'³

² Surah Bani Israel (17): 107

³ Suratul-Maryam (19): 58

So let us reflect in our souls dear believers. Have we fulfilled the rights of our knowledge and action as they used to and as needed?

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31

Asking about each other sincerely

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would ask about each others affairs, to make sure that everyone had enough food, clothes and money. They would ask because they wanted to help with such things as repaying their debts and sharing their burdens.

People are strangers to such manners today, and contradict their way. Maybe somebody asks his friend, "How are you, or how's things?" He replies, "Good, alright, etc." The person replies while concealing the real situation. This is because he knows that the one asking is not really concerned with his problems nor even wants to know about them.

The statement "How are you?" is just a fruitless custom now where most people do not even bother to wait for a reply. So the questioner does not wait for the reply nor does the one asked bother to give a true response.

One of the *Salaf* said, "If one of you do not wish to fulfil his brother's needs by sharing his worries or by making invocations (*du'ah*) then do not ask – How are things – because it is considered hypocrisy."

The *Salaf* (may Allah be pleased with them) used to ask about each other so that the forgetful one would be reminded about thankfulness to Allah, thus resulting in a fruitful question.

Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked, "How are you this morning?" He replied, "This morning I enter as a lowly slave to a magnificent Lord. I enter the morning ordered by His command."

Imam ash-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked, "How are you this morning?" He replied, "This morning I have entered eating my Lord's provision but not fulfilling true gratitude towards Him."

Malik ibn Dinar (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked, "How are you this morning?" He replied, "I enter the morning with my remaining age diminishing and my sins increasing."

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From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they were keenly aware of fighting Iblees (*shaytan*) and they worked hard to know about his plots and plans. Allah the Most High said, "Verily the *shaytan* is an enemy to you all, so take him as an enemy. He only calls his followers to become the people of a blazing fire."¹

This is an aspect of life that has been ignored by many people. Since Iblees is never forgetful about us, we should not ever ignore him. He watches us and he is always keen to trip up the slave of Allah so that the person falls into that which Allah the Most High hates.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Iblees places his throne (*'arsh*) on the sea from which he sends his armies and troops. The one highest in reputation to him is the one who is greatest in spreading turmoil among the people."²

Fudhayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "If Iblees

¹ Suratul-Fatir (35): 6

² Muslim

conquers the son of Adam with one of three (things) he says – I will not seek anything else from him – (1) being fond of himself, (2) deeming his deeds to be plentiful, and (3) forgetfulness of his sins."

Wahb ibn Munabbih (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Beware of despising *shaytan* in public while obeying him in secret. The one who sleeps in disobedience then for that reason *shaytan* will sleep with him as his bride."

Let us pay attention dear believers and be warned for the sake of our self. Do not think Iblees has abandoned us when we are seen coming to worship, but think carefully and search the fullest search and we will be sure to find his presence to some extent. Therefore let us seek the forgiveness and protection of Allah more.

Al-Hasan (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "If *shaytan* saw you consistently obeying Allah he will seek you time and time again. If he sees your consistency he grows weary of you and rejects you. If you change, however, each and every time, then he begins to have hope in you."

33 *Considering not being thankful*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would testify against themselves that they had not really thanked Allah. That is because they would see all their praise for Him as another of Allah's favours upon them; the favours of Allah remaining and unending, impossible for anyone to catch up to them.

Abu Bakr ibn Abdullah al-Muzani (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Never does a slave say *alhumdulillaah* (Praise be to Allah) without more thanks becoming required for him!"

Wahb ibn Munabbih (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "If your thanking Allah the Most High is a favour to you from the favours of Allah then in reality there is no such thing as true thankfulness. All your thanks mean that you have realised Allah's abundant favours upon you, and that you cannot praise Allah enough for them."

Sahl at-Tustari (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Showing thankfulness to Allah is not to disobey Him with His favours. The whole body is from the favours of Allah and His gift, so do not disobey Him with any of it."

Mujahid and Makhul (may Allah have mercy upon them) used to say about the statement of Allah, "Then you will be asked that Day about the enjoyment"¹, "Indeed this is the cool drink, the shelter of a home, the satisfaction of one's belly, the perfection of features, and the joy of sleep."

If Sufyan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) passed by a policeman he would fall down in prostration to Allah the Most High saying, "Praise be to Allah who did not make me a policeman or a taxman." Then he would say to his family, "Sometimes a person in trouble passes you by. He may be rewarded through his trial, but you ask your Lord to protect you (from it). But then some of those oppressors passes you by, sinning in their tribulation, but you do not ask for Allah's protection!"

Al-Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say about the statement of the Most High, "Verily mankind is ungrateful to His Lord"², "This means that he remembers the tragedies that befell him but forgets the blessings."

Awn ibn Abdullah (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say about

¹ Suratus-Takathur (102): 8

² Suratul-Adiyat (100): 6

the statement of Allah, "They recognise the blessings of Allah and then they deny them"³, "This means they see that the favours are from Allah but then they attribute their origin to people, ignoring Allah the Most High. They say if it was not for so-and-so then these favours would not have come to them."

³ Suratun-Nahl (16): 83

34 Examining goodness

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would analyse their piety (*taqwa*) strictly without ever claiming to possess it. Allah the Most High has said, "Therefore do not ascribe purity to yourselves. He knows best who has *taqwa*."¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "*Taqwa* is here," and he pointed to his chest.²

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "None can reach the station of *taqwa* until he has action and words neither of which when exposed will be to his embarrassment either in this world or in the Hereafter." He was once asked, "When does the worshipper reach the peak of *taqwa*?" He replied, "When, if he put all his thoughts and desires in his heart on a plate and then wandered around in the market, he does not feel ashamed of anything there." He would regularly say, "The sign of the *muttaqi* (a person of *taqwa*) is to stop oneself from speaking just like one in *ihram* stops himself from speaking. The *muttaqi* needs to

¹ Suratun-Najm (53): 32

² Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and Ahmad

be a scholar (*Alim*) of the *Shari'ah*, all of it, otherwise he gives up *taqwa* without realising it."

Abu Darda (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "From the totality of *taqwa* is that the slave fears regarding his Lord even for things of the weight of an atom."

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked about *taqwa*. He said, "It is a road full of thorns. One who walks it needs to have extreme patience."

Sufyan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "We met a people who loved it when it was said to them – Fear Allah the Most High. Today you find that people only become annoyed at this."

A person asked Fudhayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him), "Which country would you like me to live in?" Fudhayl replied, "There is no connection between you and any nation. The best country for you is the country which helps you to acquire *taqwa*."

O believers! Let us search your soul. Have we feared Allah as our pious *Salaf* feared? Or have we fallen short of that? Let us seek the forgiveness of Allah as all praise belongs to Him, the Lord of the worlds.

35 *Hiding the mistakes of others*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would always conceal the mistakes of their brothers. On the other hand they would harshly question their own souls about their own carefulness and piety (*at-tawara*).

Thus they would hate embarrassing anyone remembering their own mistakes in words, action, food and drink. They would look at themselves so that they would not find themselves falling into what is *haram*, especially with regards to the tongue, stomach, private parts and the eye.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Abstain from the *haram* and you will be the best of the worshippers amongst the people. Be content with what Allah gives you by way of provision and you will be the richest of people. Be good to your neighbour and you will be a believer. Love for the people what you love for yourself and you will be a Muslim and do not increase in

laughter because too much laughter kills the heart.”¹

Yunus ibn Ubaid (may Allah have mercy on him) said, “True carefulness in religion is to get away from all doubtfulness and to take account of the soul with every step. So whoever is not like that cannot be said to be cautious.”

One of the *Salaf* said, “Do not undermine cautiousness in the smallest things since that is a stairway that leads to degrading cautiousness in larger things.”

Dahhak used to say, “We met a certain people who would travel for three months or more to learn caution in matters of Islam. Today people do not seek this and do not practice it even if their attention is brought to it.”

If the *Salaf* dropped some money in a place and they returned to that place on realising their money was missing, they would not take it on seeing it saying, “It is possible that this money fell from someone else’s pocket and someone else took my money.”

¹ At-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, Ibn Majah

36

Having complete intelligence

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that due to their complete intelligence they would be wise and show affection, calmness and seriousness and they would talk little.

From the statements of Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), “The tallness of a slave ends at the age of twenty-two. His intelligence reaches its peak at twenty-eight. What is after that until the end of his life but just test and affliction?”

Qatadah (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, “Men are of three types: A man, half a man and no man. The man is the one from whose opinion and intelligence there is benefit. The half man is the one who questions the intelligent and acts according to their opinion. The person who is not a man is the one who has neither intelligence nor opinion nor does he ask anyone else.”

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Sufyan ibn Uyainah (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "The most nimble of creatures still have need of a voice. The cleverest women still need to have a husband, and the cleverest man still needs to consult wise men."

Wahb ibn Munabbih (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever claims to be intelligent but not geared towards the Afterlife then he is a liar."

So let us realize this brothers and sisters and follow our pure ancestors and we will find peace and rest.

37 *Being silent and speaking with wisdom*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would maintain silence and speak with wisdom, which made matters easy for the students.

One of the *Salaf* said, "Wisdom is kindled by four things: regret after sins, readiness for death, emptiness of the stomach, and accompanying those who forsake this world."

Here are some examples of their wise sayings:

Ash-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "The people who have the least relaxation are the hateful and the envious."

Abu Mu'awiyah al-Aswad (may Allah have mercy on him) said,

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39

Preventing backbiting

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would keep away from anything that led to backbiting in their assemblies. Their gatherings were thus saved from becoming meetings of sin. They would be afraid that on the Day of Judgement perhaps their righteous actions would not balance-out the evil of even one act of backbiting. One of them would increase in doing good deeds so that he would have enough reward on the Day of Judgement to pay back to his disputants who may have some problem with him on account of an argument over property or honour.

Allah the Most High says, "O you who believe! Avoid suspicion as much as possible: for suspicion in some cases is a sin: and do not spy on each other nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No, you would abhor it: but fear Allah: for Allah is oft-returning, most merciful"¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Do you know what is backbiting?" They said,

¹ Suratul-Hujurat (49): 12

"Whoever sought goodness in only what is plentiful from Allah then little does he sleep in the night and day." He also said, "Whoever seeks merit from the ones who are vile then he has no one to blame but himself if he is insulted."

Ash-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever spreads gossip for you will spread gossip against you. Whoever relates tales to you will also tell tales about you. Whoever when you please him says about you what is not true about you, when you anger him will also say about you what is not true about you."

Abu Umairah (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever brings no good to you in your life; let not your eyes weep over his death." He also said, "Recognition (of sins) ought to destroy committing (them in the first place)" while Ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "Humbleness raises the vile person and arrogance lowers the fine one. Whoever seeks leadership, it will make him tired, but whoever runs from leadership, he will be chased by it."

Fudayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever criticises the people a lot, will have few friends", while Yahya ibn Mu'adh (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever has patience rises above all of his colleagues and whoever becomes angry, is plunged into the sea of his humiliation."

Let us realise this, brothers and sisters, and clear our inner self from the love of this world and running after it. Let us remember Allah the Most High more. When we have completed purifying our inside, Allah the Most High will cause us to speak with wisdom and we will become the wise persons of our time, without actually desiring it or chasing after it.

38 *Being silent and fasting*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would fast and measure their words: just like the scholars who have learnt from them and have practiced their knowledge.

Muhammad ar-Rahiby (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever entered extra food into his stomach, then out of his mouth will come extra words."

Ibrahim an-Nakha'i (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever reflects will find that the noblest and most dignified person in any gathering is the one who is most silent. Because silence beautifies the scholar and hides the faults of the ignorant."

Ma'ruf al-Kirakhi (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "One of the signs of Allah that He is abandoning a person is that he speaks about unnecessary things."

Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) used to place

a small stone in his mouth. He did this for several years to get into the habit of speaking little. He would only take out the stone before eating and praying. He went through this situation because he was afraid of speaking for no real reason. When death came to him he would take hold of his tongue saying, "This is what produces problems."

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Part of someone's being a good Muslim is his leaving alone that which does not concern him."¹

Shighny ibn Mati' al-Asbahi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever's speech increased, then his mistakes (also) increased."

¹ At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah

"Allah and His Messenger know best." He said, "Backbiting is to mention about your brother something he dislikes." He was asked, "O Messenger of Allah! What if I find in my brother what I mentioned?" The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "If what you say is true about him then this is backbiting, but if what you say is not true about him then you have slandered him!"²

Sufyan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "When your brother is out of your sight, mention him as you would like him to mention you when you are out of his sight."

Malik ibn Dinar (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "It is enough of a sin that one is not good, but it is worse to sit in a gathering and harm the reputation of the good people!"

Muhammad ibn Sirin (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Part of backbiting that it is not allowed, (which most people do not realise) to say: This person is more knowledgeable than that person. This is because the one who is made superior would be annoyed at this, and it is well known that backbiting is for a person to speak about another concerning what he (the latter) dislikes."

O brothers and sisters, let us present these facts to our soul and check whether we have saved ourselves from backbiting so that we can thank Allah, or have we slipped into backbiting so that we should seek His forgiveness?

² Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi and ad-Darimi

40 *Maintaining purity and focus in prayer*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that their ablution and prayer (*salah*) would be free from the distracting whispers of the devil (*shaitan*). They would be on guard and actively combat against that from happening even after they had reached the limits of cautiousness.

This is simply because these whispers from *shaitan* come from a dark heart and a dark heart results from dark actions. This in turn comes from eating *haram* and doubtful food. Thus whoever perfected the eating of *halal* then Iblees can never find a way to affect him. Some people who fed themselves by eating too much *haram* and doubtful food had tried to achieve nearness to Allah and submissiveness in their worship but without any success. They would become affected by extreme carefulness and hesitation so that they would suffer from tiresome attempts to achieve just even the correct intention. For example at the start of the prayer they would be hesitant and repeat a word or action without

completing it as if they were hunting for something which has fallen out of their hands.

You will see him during the Opening *Takbir* haltingly saying, "aak ...aak... baar... baar... baar". Some scholars have concluded that such action actually cancels the prayer because it is not a remembrance which is sanctioned by the *Shari'ah*.

If you ask one of them to perform the ablution in the simple, straightforward and unaffected way of the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) he would not feel contented with that.

We ask Allah to protect us from this clear deviation which is simply from the whispers of *shaitan* which has no part in Islam.

41

Hiding the secrets

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would conceal the secrets of the people. They would say, "The hearts of the free are graves full of secrets."

Namimah (carrying tales) is to spread or relay to a third party some words which cause harm to the one from whom the words were initially heard. It is also defined as uncovering what is disliked to be uncovered.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "The *Qattat* will not enter Paradise"¹ i.e., the one who practiced *namimah*. It is also reported in the explanation (*tafsir*) of the statement of Allah "And his woman a carrier of firewood"² that she would practice *namimah* and spread gossip.

Yahya ibn Abi Kathir (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "The one who does *namimah* is worse than the magician even though no one realizes this. What the one who gossips can do in a period of time a sorcerer cannot do in

¹ Al-Bukhari, Muslim, at-Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud

² Suratul-Lahab (): 4

a month. Gossip has spilled blood and gave rise to great tribulation expelling people from their countries and other evil things."

Khalid ibn Safran (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Despise the one who gossips even if he speaks the truth. *Namimah* is relating tales and accepting this is recommending the narrator. This acceptance is then worse than the *namimah*."

Let us know this O brothers and sisters and beware of exposing the secrets of our fellow Muslims or relating to others what we hear from them that can spoil the relationships.

42

Looking at one's own mistakes

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would keep themselves busy learning from their own mistakes and correcting them rather than looking at the mistakes of others.

They would fight to conceal the faults of others because the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Shall I not tell you who are the worst among you? Those who walk with gossip (*namimah*) separating those who love each other. Those who do wrong to those free from fault."¹ He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "Whoever conceals a Muslim, Allah will conceal him in this world and the Hereafter."²

One of the *Salaf* said, "One of you might see his own faults but he still loves himself. He then hates his Muslim brother on suspicion. So where is the logic in this?"

¹ Ahmad and al-Baihaqi in "Shu'b al-Iman"

² Part of a *hadith* reported by Muslim and by Abu Dawud

It is reported that Isa ibn Maryam (Jesus) (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "Do not look at people's faults as if you are lords, but look at your own faults as if you are slaves, because people are of two types: afflicted and pardoned. So have mercy on the afflicted and thank Allah for pardoning you and protecting you from it."

Umar ibn-ul-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "May Allah have mercy on the one who pointed out to me my mistakes."

Ash-Sha'bi (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Whoever sought after the mistakes of his brothers is left with no friends."

So let us preserve our tongues dear brothers and sisters because the one who breaks the hearts of the people they will break his heart in turn. Beware of forgetting ourselves when we pry into the mistakes of our fellow Muslim, but someone else's mistakes should be a reminder of our own mistakes. We are all made from the same earth, so if it is possible for others to slip then it is possible for us too.

42

Looking at one's own mistakes

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would keep themselves busy learning from their own mistakes and correcting them rather than looking at the mistakes of others.

They would fight to conceal the faults of others because the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Shall I not tell you who are the worst among you? Those who walk with gossip (*namimah*) separating those who love each other. Those who do wrong to those free from fault."¹ He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) also said, "Whoever conceals a Muslim, Allah will conceal him in this world and the Hereafter."²

One of the *Salaf* said, "One of you might see his own faults but he still loves himself. He then hates his Muslim brother on suspicion. So where is the logic in this?"

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² Part of a *hadith* reported by Muslim and by Abu Dawud

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43

Being generous and comforting

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they were deeply generous and open-handed whether they were travellers on a journey or resident at a place. They would grant wealth and comfort to one another freely. This would encourage cooperation in standing up for Islam which was their goal.

Abdullah ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) used to make a precondition with his travelling companions that he would be the one to spend on them.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ud (may Allah be pleased with him) was asked as to who were the sensible people. He replied, "He is the one who stores his wealth where no thief can reach it", i.e., for the Hereafter.

Abdullah ibn Ja'far (may Allah have mercy on him) was invited to a wedding feast (*walimah*) but he could not go because of some difficulties. So he sent 500 *dinars* to the bridegroom

apologising and asking him to pardon him for not attending.

Sa'd ibn Ubadah (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "O Allah provide me with wealth which I can use to do good, because the desire to do good cannot be fulfilled without wealth." Then he would recite:

"I see my soul longing to perform goodness;
But it falls short without that certain sum of money;
So my soul does not push me to be miserly;
And my lack of wealth does not fulfil my yearning."

Let us realize this brothers and sisters and beware of showing that we are righteous when we contradict the manners of the predecessors, in generosity, open-handedness and comforting others. They used to give plentifully without feeling superior to anyone. They would split their loincloth in two and give half to their brother. If anyone asked them for anything or begged them they would say, "Welcome O one who carries our provision to the Hereafter without any charge." If someone's servant died they would send another servant to their brother whom he would quietly accept, but the sender would not think he is superior to his brother. If it was heard that someone had debt, they would repay it without consulting the indebted. The one who was in debt would keep silent if he found out about it as if his debt had been repaid from his own money because of the good heartedness of his brother.

44

Being generous towards guests

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would be generous towards their guests, extending hospitality and serving them themselves unless they had a legitimate excuse from the *Shari'ah* to prevent them.

They would never think that they had sufficiently fed their guests nor served them enough, as they have a right to stay with them and a right to be thought well of.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day then he should be generous towards his guest."¹

It is recorded in the two *sahih* collections (Al-Bukhari & Muslim) on the authority of Abu Shuraih (may Allah be pleased with him) who said, "My two eyes saw and my two ears heard the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) when he said, "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day

¹ Part of a *hadith* reported by al-Bukhari in "al-Adab", Muslim, Abu Dawud and ibn Majah

should be generous to his guest by giving him his reward." They asked, "What is his reward?" He (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Entertainment for a day and night with high quality food and then three days entertainment with ordinary food, and what is beyond that is charity."² Muslim also reported on the authority of Abu Shuraih (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Entertaining the guest lasts for three days. His reward is to give him superior food for a day and a night. What is spent on the guest after three days is charity. It is not permitted that the guest stays for more than three days so as to put him into difficulty."³ Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "The *zakat* of one's home is to keep a room there for guests."

One of the *Salaf* said in condemnation of the selfish one who does not honour his guests:

"If you wish to be his brother;
Then lift your right from his food;
Death is easier to him than for you to eat morsels and cheer;
It is the same if you broke some bread;
Or broke one of his bones; And if you pass by his door, then save your bread from his son."

² Al-Bukhari in "al-Adab", Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi and Malik in "al-Muajtta"

³ Muslim

45 *Accepting invitations*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would never accept invitations to unlawful food nor if only the rich were invited nor if unlawful things were occurring in a *walimah*.

Abu Mas'ud al-Badri (may Allah be pleased with him) would never accept an invitation to a *walimah* unless he knew there were not any prohibited things present there.

If Abu Ayyub al-Ansari (may Allah be pleased with him) went to a *walimah* and saw a curtain on a wall he would return saying, "No one except for such-and-such people cover their houses with cloth. We do not eat the food of such people." One of the *Salaf* used to say, "The *sunnah* of the *walimah* has gone. The bowls filled with food would be brought to the *masjid* at meal time and everyone there would eat; the rich and the poor, those of high or low status. If only the rich were invited then the people would not eat but they would say: This is the worst food."

46 *Increasing in charity*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would give lots of charity. They would certainly spend day and night, secretly and openly from all that was beyond their needs. If some of them did not have food or wealth to spend, they would be charitable by sparing the people from their harms and by putting up with the harms of others instead.

Allah the Most High said, "Those who spend their wealth by night and day, in secret and public, shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve."¹ He also said, "You shall not attain piety (*birr*) until you spend out of that which you love. Whatever good you spend Allah knows well."²

Abdul-Aziz ibn Umar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "*Salat* will take you half the road, fasting lets you reach the door of the king, and charity allows you to enter into the king's company." He also used to say, "To us wealth is deposits for being generous."

¹ Suratul-Baqarah (20): 284
² Surah Aali-Imran (3): 92

Their manners were to smile cheerfully at the face of the beggar and not to suspect him. They would always think that he only begged out of dire need.

Sufyan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) used to be overjoyed if he saw a beggar at his door saying, "Welcome to the one who has come to wash my sins."

Fudhayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Beggars are such good people! They carry our provision to the Afterlife without payment until they place it on the scale in front of Allah the Most High."

47

Choosing their companions

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would not take as brothers anyone except those whom they knew would fulfil their dues towards them. If your brother does not fulfil his rights towards you then he is not concerned with your wellbeing.

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "You should all have brothers since they are provision for you in the world and the Hereafter. Have you not heard the call of the People of Hell?: '...Now we have neither intercessors nor a close friend...' "¹

Imam ash-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "If it was not for talking with brothers in this world and night prayers I would have preferred not to have remained alive."

One of the *Salaf* said, "An intelligent person should refrain

¹ Suratush-Shu'arah (26): 100-101

from brotherliness with three: the daft, the liar, and the corrupt. As for the daft, he never talks good about you nor can you expect him to aid you against any misfortune. His silence is better than his speech, his distance is better than his closeness. As for life with the liar, it can never be comfortable. He spreads news about you to others. They fix hatred and enmity between you and the people. The corrupt pretends that he wants to do good for you and does not help you in any matter in Islam."

Let us realise this brothers and sisters and search our souls. See if we have fulfilled our fellow Muslims' rights or have we refrained from being concerned about their welfare. Do we stay with them for the sake of Allah or for personal reasons? Anything that is not devoted to Allah is harmful for the worshipper in this world and the Hereafter. So demand that we fulfil our brother's rights and let us not demand our own rights, whether openly or secretly.

Imam ash-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) recited the following:

"A friend who does not help on a troublesome day;
Is closer to an enemy in my calculation;
In every time friend and brothers;
Are sought only for mutual comforting;
I have expended effort to search the people thoroughly;
For a brother reliable;

But successive evenings have made me tired;
Lands to me becoming hostile in my strangeness;
As if the people there were not from the human race."

48

Showing absence of hate

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would not show enmity to the people but rather they would be compliant with them. They would not face anyone with bad conduct even if the people showed hate and dislike towards them.

It has been related that Dawud (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to his son, "Do not consider even one enemy as being too few. Do not think that one thousand friends are too many."

Ash-Shafi'i (may Allah have mercy on him) recited:

A thousand friends to a person are not plenty;
But one enemy verily is too many;

It is reported that Ayyub (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was asked, "What was the most harmful thing to you during

your days of hardship?" He replied, "My enemies' gloating at my misfortune."

One of the *Salaf* recited this on his behalf:

All the world's gains are temporary deceptions;
No happy man's happiness remains;
So say to those pleased at our indisposition;
Prepare! Since one's roles in the world alternate;

Muhammad ibn Maqatil (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "Beware of the harm of the one to whom you do well and excuse your brother the way you excuse yourself." Then he would say:

You pardon yourself if you do wrong;
But other than you are left unpardoned;
You see in his eye a speck of dust;
Whilst in yours a tree trunk you see not!

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49

Keeping away from bad influences

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would frequently keep themselves away from the sinners. Allah the Most High said stating that Ibrahim (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "And I shall call on my Lord and I hope that my call to my Lord will not be unblessed. When he turned away from them and from those whom they worshipped besides Allah, We granted him Ishaq and Ya'qub, making both of the prophets."¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "People will come across a time when the best possession of a Muslim will be sheep, which he will take to the top of mountains and places of rainfall, so as to flee with his Islam from calamities."²

Hassan ibn Salih (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "We lived with a people who would love each other from far away, disliking to meet."

¹ Suratul-Maryam (19): 48-49
² Al-Bukhari

Rabi' ibn Khuthaym (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "No one should isolate himself in worship except after studying Islam deeply, because *imam* Malik used to say: Study deeply and then seclude yourself."

Sufyan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "This is the time of silence and remaining in the homes and being pleased with one's possession until one dies." He also used to say, "We met a people who were like medicines in themselves because of whom one could be cured. Now people give out incurable illnesses."

It was said, "Keeping yourself away from the general public is from the completeness of morals."

Let us understand this brothers and sisters and interact with people to bring about obedience to Allah. Unless we are going to be teachers then it may be best to keep away from habitual sinners or those who are excessive in taking advantage of permitted things, in case we are affected ourselves.

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50 *Increasing in humility*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that every time one of them came closer to Allah then he would increase in humility and humbleness too. From the signs of the true closeness with Allah is that every time Allah increases His beloved or friend in glory or honour, that person grows in humility.

Allah said, "That is the home of the Hereafter we give it to those who did not seek any highness in the world or any corruption. The good end is for the good."¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "The one who has an atom's weight of pride in his heart will not enter Paradise."²

Abu Muslim al-Khawlani (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Only the disgusting people are arrogant, and only the lowest people boast, and no one is eager to deal in lies except those who are low people to begin with."

¹ Suratul-Qasas (88): 83

² Muslim, Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi

While Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) was in charge of Madinah during the time of the *khalifah* (caliph) Marwan, he used to carry a bundle of wood on his head from the market and (while passing through) would say, "Make way for your *amir* to pass!"

Abu Ayyub as-Sakhtiyanî (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "The scholar should put earth on his head out of humility to Allah."

Al-Hasan (may Allah have mercy on him) mentioned this verse, "Those who walk upon the earth with humbleness"³ and said, "The believers are the people described here. By Allah, their eyes, ears and body become humbled until the ignorant person think they are ill, but I swear by Allah they are not ill, but rather they are the possessors of real hearts. Fear has entered them like it had not entered anyone else. Their knowledge of the Hereafter has prevented them from the world. They would say, "All praise belongs to Allah Who removed sadness from us." I swear by Allah that they would not be saddened by what saddened most people. It is fear from the fire that made them weep."

³ Suratul-Furqan (25): 63

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51 *Not ignoring any goodness*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would not neglect any goodness which the *shari'ah* (Law) has encouraged us to do. They would not think that they had any deeds which are extra (*nawafil*). This is due to the fact that deeds become optional only when one finishes his obligatory duties as Allah the Most High said to His Messenger (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace), "And pray in the small watches of the morning: (it would be) and additional prayer for you: soon will your Lord raise you to a station of praise and glory" [Suratul-Isra (17): 79] It was therefore made obligatory for the Messenger who had completed all his other compulsory deeds.

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Do not belittle any good thing, even meeting your brother with a smile."¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "The good word is a charity."²

¹ Muslim

² Ahmad, and Muslim

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) used to do a tremendous amount of good deeds saying, "For the likes of me there are no optional deeds, but the optional deeds are for the one who has finished his obligatory deeds."

Salman al-Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him) would say, "The one who does optional deeds excessively and does not complete the obligatory actions is like a trader who lost his capital but he still seeks a profit."

Yunus ibn 'Ubaid (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Whoever belittles the non-optional deeds has belittled the obligatory actions."

Let us know this brothers and sisters and increase in our *nawafil* virtuous deeds and not become bored or disinterested in them. After doing that let us not think that we have rendered the obligatory thanks for even one of the favours of Allah.

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52

Being repentant

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would repent (*tawbah*) a great deal and seek forgiveness (*istighfar*) throughout the day and night because they realized that they were not free from sins even in their good deeds. Thus they would seek forgiveness from the problems in their acts of worship, such as lack of awe in the prayer (*salah*) or lack of attentiveness towards Allah the Most High Who is ever-watching.

Allah the Most High said, "All of you repent to Allah O believers, so that you might be successful."¹

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "By Allah I seek the forgiveness of Allah and repent to Him more than seventy times in a day."²

One of the *Salaf* said, "Whoever does not repent in the morning and evening is from the wrongdoers. Allah said: Whoever does not repent then he is of the wrongdoers³."

¹ Suratul-Nur (24): 35

² Al-Bukhaari and Muslim with the wording, "For indeed I turn to Him (in repentance) a hundred times every day".

³ Suratul-Hujurat (49): 11

Yahya ibn Mu'adh (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, "A mistake after repentance is uglier than seventy mistakes before it."

Sufyan ibn Uyainah (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked, "What are the signs of a sincere repentance?" He replied, "Four things: Taking little from the world, a humble soul, seeking many ways of closeness to Allah through obedience, and seeing one's deficiency and insignificance in all that."

Fudhayl ibn Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say to the *mujahidun* (fighters purely in the cause of Allah to make His word supreme) before they left for *jihad*, "Do *tawbah* because it pushes away from you what swords cannot."

Umar ibn-ul-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) used to say, "Sit with those who repent frequently because they have the softest hearts."

Let us realise this well brothers and sisters. As long as we are in this world we should increase in asking forgiveness because it puts out the anger of Allah *al-Jabbar*. Let us not think that if we do the deeds that wipe away sins that our sins have indeed been forgiven, because those deeds themselves could have preconditions which we have not met properly. Let us understand that a believer does not become truly contented until he enters Paradise.

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53 *Enjoining good and forbidding evil*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would enjoin the good and forbid the evil even if everything they did were not all good or they did any evil themselves. Some people imagine that this work can only be done by one who is free from sins, but this is an entirely wrong view. If everyone refrained from enjoining goodness and forbidding evil until someone had complete control over this first, then no one would be left to do this task ever!

One of the *Salaf* said, "If the sinners cannot correct the disobedient, then who after Muhammad (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) can correct the disobedient?"

Allah said, "Let there arise out of you a group of people calling to goodness, ordering the good and forbidding the evil. They are the successful."¹ "You are the best nation brought forth for mankind. You order the good and forbid the people and you believe in Allah."²

¹ Sunn. Auli-Tirmidhi (3): 104

² Sunn. Auli-Tirmidhi (3): 130

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever sees an evil then let him change it with his hand. If it is not possible for him to do so then let him change it with his tongue. If he is unable to do that then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith (*iman*)."³

Hudhaifah ibn-ul-Yaman (may Allah be pleased with him) said, "There will come a time when assemblies will be like the dead body of a donkey which will be more preferable to them than sitting with a believer who orders and forbids them."

Sufyan ath-Thawri (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked, "Should a person order the good even if he knows that the other person will reject it?" He replied, "Yes, so that he is pardoned in the sight of Allah (from not doing his duty)".

Malik ibn Dinar (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "Goodness has left weeping and evil has come laughing." Then he would say:

The people who were led by the desire to do good have gone;

The correctors of every single wrong;

I've remained among a later generation who praise one another;

So one blind man doesn't say to another that "You are blind."

³ Muslim, at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, an-Nisai and ibn Majah

53 *Enjoining good and forbidding evil*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would enjoin the good and forbid the evil even if everything they did were not all good or they did any evil themselves. Some people imagine that this work can only be done by one who is free from sins, but this is an entirely wrong view. If everyone refrained from enjoining goodness and forbidding evil until someone had complete control over this first, then no one would be left to do this task ever!

One of the *Salaf* said, "If the sinners cannot correct the disobedient, then who after Muhammad (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) can correct the disobedient?"

Allah said, "Let there arise out of you a group of people calling to goodness, ordering the good and forbidding the evil. They are the successful."¹ "You are the best nation brought forth for mankind. You order the good and forbid the people and you believe in Allah."²

¹ Surah Aali-'Imran (3): 104

² Surah Aali-'Imran (3): 110

The Messenger of Allah (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) said, "Whoever sees an evil then let him change it with his hand. If it is not possible for him to do so then let him change it with his tongue. If he is unable to do that then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith (*iman*)."³

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³ Muslim, at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, an-Nisai and ibn Majah

Let us parade these qualities in front of us and see if we are one of those who condemn the bad or not, or if we truly love Allah. Have we defended the *Shari'ah* of our Messenger Muhammad (may Allah honour him and grant him blessed peace) or have we forsaken it? Most of the people today have given up defending the *Shari'ah* through their words, deeds and by silence over evil. There is neither strength nor movement except with Allah.

54 *Not being proud of one's own deeds*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would not be proud of their own actions but they would see deficiency in them.

Mutarraf ibn Abdullah (may Allah have mercy on him) said, "It is more beloved to me to spend the night sleeping and wake up regretful than to spend the night standing in prayer and wake up proud of myself."

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) used to say, "If the actions of the son of Adam were good he would have destroyed himself through pride, but Allah tries him by showing him his shortcomings."

If the *Salaf* were praised they would say, "O Allah make me better than what they say and forgive me for what they do not know."

Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) would say, "O Allah I seek

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your protection from the bad that they say and I seek your forgiveness for what they do not know.”

Bishr al-Hafy (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, “If you see a person who is vain about his knowledge and proud about himself, then know that he has completed his failure.”

Abdul Aziz ibn Abi Rawad (may Allah have mercy on him) would say, “If we remember the condition of the *Salaf* between ourselves then all of us will be exposed.”

55

Preparing for salah

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would prepare for standing in front of Allah before every prayer, right from the start. One of them would gradually increase his awe of Allah and reverence for His greatness on hearing the *adhan* (call to prayer) and by the time the phrase “Come to prayer” is uttered they would get the feeling that they were in the very presence of Allah.

It says in a *hadith*, “Five prayers have been decreed by Allah for His worshippers, whoever brings them (to Allah) neither discarding any of them nor undermining their rights, he has a promise with Allah to enter him into Paradise.”

Ali ibn Hussain (may Allah have mercy on him) would become pale on making ablution. He would then be asked, “What comes over you while you make *wudhu*?” He would reply, “Do you realize whom I am going to stand in front of?”

Hasan al-Basri (may Allah have mercy on him) once saw a person praying whilst he played with his beard. He heard him say

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in his prostration, "O Allah! Marry me in Paradise to its women such that it will be the sweetness of my eye." Al-Hasan (may Allah have mercy on him) said to him, "O so-and-so! I never saw anyone proposing for a lady from Paradise with less modesty than you. You propose for a lady from Paradise from Allah the Most High while you are playing!"

56 *Being careful with trade*

From the morals and manners of the *Salaf* was that they would stay away from sitting in the markets for buying and selling unless they knew the rules of business. They would do this also because they understood that one should not be so preoccupied with business so as to be kept away from the actions of the Hereafter. That was considered to be a misfortune in this world as well as for the Next. This is the reality with anything that engages one away from Allah.

Imam Malik (may Allah have mercy on him) would order the leaders to gather the merchants so that he could see them. If he found someone who had not understood the rulings of business or what is lawful and forbidden, he would stop him from the market and say to him, "Learn the rules of buying and selling and then you can sit in the market, because the one who does not have deep knowledge consumes usury willingly or unwillingly."

If there is anything an honest and true Muslim learns from life, it is the great value of having good manners and paying sincere attention to one's character in front of Allah. Many a well spoken and intelligent person manages to acquire a sound reputation only to lose it quickly due to subsequent shallow and hideous behaviour. Loss of repute is bad but not quite as calamitous as the harm done to the noble cause of inviting others to Islam and to a godly life. As a result, attitudes harden both towards those who try to promote the faith and those who seek to live by it. This breeds contempt and despair. However, the greatest loss is for the individual who learns and talks about Islam but fails to personally improve in gracious and benevolent character. Such people concentrate on teaching and advising others without adequately looking at their own hearts. They can quote material and use jargon that gives them an air of sophistication and allows them to cheat the public into accepting them as knowledgeable for a while. However, real knowledge nurtures honouring Muslims and others appropriately and prevents one from being rude. One can be rude in many ways, such as being judgemental, harsh, presumptuous, selfish, pretentious, sectarian and so on. Indeed, real knowledge makes a person humble, mature in outlook and careful when dealing with others. Real knowledge, when lodged in the heart, changes a person to appreciate goodness wherever it is found and value creation with gratitude to Allah.

This book offers a glimpse into the lives of those who have been praised by both Allah and His Messenger in general. Written in easy English and specially adapted for those who speak it as a first language, it is an invaluable aid to developing one's character in the footsteps of those who lived and worshipped Allah honourably. It is based on an original Arabic compilation and has been checked for authenticity. People of all ages and learning should be able to benefit from this book. The style facilitates vitally needed reflection on this topic and makes for a great gift to anyone for whom we care.